



DANESFORT DISPATCHES

OCTOBER 2013

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GREETINGS FROM THE CONSUL GENERAL

Dear American Community,

Each October brings with it the beginning of a new fiscal year for the U.S. Government. This proved to be a challenging period this year in Washington, D.C. with the result that parts of the Executive Branch were forced to shut down. At Consulate General Belfast, we were able to continue to provide vital services for American citizens and to continue to issue visas through the Consular Section. I am pleased to report that a political agreement was eventually reached to provide a budget through January 15 and the Federal Government is once again operating normally.

The autumn is always a busy time and this year is no exception. The First and deputy First Ministers are currently on a trip to the United States. After a September trip to New York city, they are now visiting Boston and Chicago. This comes as a reminder of the strong and warm relationships between the peoples of Northern Ireland and

the United States. This is also true at the political level as former U.S. Special Envoy Richard Haass has been invited by the Northern Ireland Executive to chair the all-party talks formally known as "The Panel of Parties in the NI Executive on Parades and Protests; Flags, Symbols and Emblems and Related Matters; and the Past." While Haass is not working for the U.S. Government in this capacity, his selection for the role is emblematic of the strong support provided by the U.S. over more than two decades for the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

Ties are just as strong on the economic and commercial level. In Boston, the First and deputy First Ministers will deliver keynote addresses at the EU-U.S. Connected Health conference, showing that Northern Ireland is able to play a vital role in Transatlantic

relations. During the recent Northern Ireland Investment Conference, the NI Executive noted that 165 U.S.-owned companies have facilities in Northern Ireland and that together they account for nearly 20,000 jobs here. While this was once a one-way street, today companies based in Northern Ireland are also investing in the U.S and two-way trade flows are increasing. The Consulate will continue to work hard to nurture these relationships just as we strive to provide services to the American community in Northern Ireland.

I hope you enjoy the October Edition of "Danesfort Dispatches," which features a new format and is chock-a-block full of important information.

Gregory Burton
Consul General

HOW TO CONTACT THE CONSULATE

Email:
consularbelfast@state.gov

Website: <http://belfast.usconsulate.gov>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Consulate-Belfast/189796969657>

Twitter: <https://mobile.twitter.com/USAinNI>

Telephone: 02890-386104

HOLIDAY TRAVEL: KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The U.S. Transportation Security Agency (TSA) provides comprehensive information for travelers heading into the U.S. Their "Know Before You Go" section offers travelers checklists and suggestions on how to have a safe and journey into the U.S. Visit their website at [TSA](http://tsa.gov).

Here is their information on Traveling with Food or Gifts:

Not sure about what you can and can't bring through the

checkpoint? We provide a list of liquid, aerosol and gel items that you should put in your checked bag, ship ahead, or leave at home if they are above the permitted 3.4 oz. You can bring **pies and cakes** through the security checkpoint, but they are subject to additional screening.

While **wrapped gifts** are not prohibited, if a bag alarms our security officers, we may have to unwrap a gift to take a closer

look inside. We recommend passengers wrap gifts after their flight or ship them ahead of time to avoid the possibility of having to open them during the screening process.

Items purchased after the security checkpoint have been pre-screened and can be taken on the plane.

For more information visit www.tsa.gov.

STUDENTS ABROAD: BE INFORMED AND BE SAFE

It's bad enough to have an emergency when you're at home. But, imagine how awful it would be in a foreign country with no idea of how to get help.

Planning for the unexpected is as important as booking the flight. The State Department now has a website —<http://studentsabroad.state.gov> — that provides information on steps to take before your trip and what to do in case of emergency. "Be Prepared" isn't just a Boy Scout motto. U.S. consular officers are located at over 260 Foreign Service posts abroad. There are also consular officers in 46 foreign cities without U.S. embassies or consulates. They're ready to provide assistance if you need it.

Earthquakes, hurricanes, political upheavals, and acts

of terrorism are only some of the events threatening the safety of Americans abroad. Each event is unique and poses its own special difficulties. When a crisis occurs, the State Department sets up a task force with all the necessary personnel to work on the situation. Usually this Washington task force is in touch 24-hours a day with our Ambassador and Foreign Service Officers at the embassy in the country affected.

The State Department works hard to provide information in times of crisis and to protect the lives of Americans abroad.

You can make it easier for the State Department to locate you by registering your trip with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Find out more at

Studentabroad.state.gov.

The website also provides a To Go section, offering checklists for your travel. Visit their website, [Checklists](#), and see if there is anything else you need before you head off.



OVERSEAS VOTERS: REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Voting is a constitutional right that American citizens eighteen years and older can freely exercise. The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* covers all active-duty members of the Uniformed Services and their families, members of the merchant marine and their families, and US citizens who reside overseas, and assists them in exercising their right to vote.

Elections are managed individually by all 55 states and territories. This means that there are 55 sets of rules for absentee voting by

UOCAVA citizens, but the basic steps are simple:

Citizens register to vote and request an absentee ballot by filling out the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), and mailing it to their local election official in the state in which they are eligible to vote.

The election official approves/disapproves the FPCA or requests additional information.

If the FPCA is approved, the election official sends an absentee ballot to the citizen.

The citizen votes and returns their ballot to their election official by their state's deadline.

The website www.fvap.gov provides UOCAVA citizens with the state-specific information they need to register to vote and request and return their ballot, or to complete an emergency back-up write in ballot.

Go to www.fvap.gov and choose the "Get Started" button under the category of UOCAVA citizen that describes you.



Federal Voting Assistance Program (www.fvap.gov)

VISA FREE TRAVEL TO THE U.S

Citizens of the following countries; **the United Kingdom, Ireland**, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland **may be eligible to travel to the United States visa free under the Visa Waiver Program for business**

or pleasure. If you are a citizen of one of the above named countries planning travel to the U.S. for business or pleasure, please follow the below instructions:

- (1) Check your eligibility for visa-free travel using the Visa Waiver Wizard at <http://london.usembassy.gov/root/visa-wizard/pages/index.html>;
- (2) If eligible for visa-free travel, apply for ESTA travel clearance at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> before you make non-refundable travel arrangements. This is the

only official ESTA application site. The fee for an ESTA application is \$14.

- (3) If you are not eligible for visa-free travel or your ESTA application is denied, you will need to apply for a visa for travel to the U.S. We advise anyone who requires a visa for travel to the U.S. to obtain a visa before making non-refundable travel arrangements.

If you have any queries about visa-free travel to the U.S, please email consularbelfast@state.gov.

NEW VISA INFORMATION AND APPOINTMENT BOOKING SYSTEM

The Embassy in London and the Consulate General in Belfast transitioned to a new nonimmigrant visa information and appointment booking system on July 26, 2013. The service can be accessed online at <https://uk.usvisa-info.com/> or by phone at 0203 608-6998.

Before accessing the site or phoning the call center, we advise visa applicants to refer to our website at <http://belfast.usconsulate.gov/apply.html> for an overview of visa application process.

There are 6 basic steps to making an application for a visa for travel to the U.S.:

- (1) Select the appropriate visa category. A full list of visa categories and the qualifying criteria for each is available at http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/niv_visa_categories.html;
- (2) Check your eligibility for a visa. If you have ever been [arrested and/or have a criminal conviction](#), have a [medical ineligibility](#), or have been [denied entry into or deported from or overstayed in the United States](#), it may affect your eligibility for a visa;
- (3) Complete the online visa application form DS-160 at <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>;
- (4) Schedule an appointment for visa interview and pay the visa processing fee online at <https://uk.usvisa-info.com/> or by phone at 0203-608-6998. This includes making arrangements to collect your passport from one of 31 collection points around the UK (no additional fee) or choosing to pay an additional \$30 fee for delivery to any UK address;
- (5) Attend the interview in Belfast or London as scheduled;
- (6) Collect your passport from collection point or await delivery of passport by courier to chosen address.

If you have any queries regarding this new service, please email consularbelfast@state.gov.



“There are 6 basic steps to making an application for a visa for travel to the U.S”

LOST OR STOLEN PASSPORTS WITH U.S. VISAS

If a friend or family member's passport containing a valid U.S. visa issued in Belfast is lost or stolen, the holder is required to report the loss or theft to the Consulate. They can either email consularbelfast@state.gov or write to: The Visa Section, U.S. Consulate General Belfast, Danesfort House, 223 Stranmillis Road, Belfast, BT9 5GR, with the following information:

- * Full name, date and place of birth;

- * The number and nationality of the lost or stolen passport;
- * The type of visa held and date and place of issuance;

They should provide a description of the loss or theft and if it has been reported to the police. If reported to the police, please provide details including crime report/reference number.

Note: Once the passport holder has reported the passport as lost or stolen we will not be able to amend the record should the passport be found. please note that the visas will be invalid for future travel to the U.S., and you must apply in person at the Embassy or Consulate abroad for a new visa. Therefore, please ensure that the passport is not lying in a drawer somewhere before you submit the report .

DIVERSITY VISA (DV2015)- IMMIGRANT VISA LOTTERY

The congressionally mandated Diversity Immigrant Visa Program makes available up to 55,000 diversity visas (DVs) annually, drawn from random selection among all entries to persons who meet strict eligibility requirements from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

Applicants must submit entries electronically at www.dvlottery.state.gov between October 1, 2013, and November 2, 2013. We strongly encourage applicants not to wait until the last week of the registration period to enter as heavy demand may result in

website delays. All entrants must print and retain their online confirmation page and confirmation number as they will need this to check if their application has been selected.

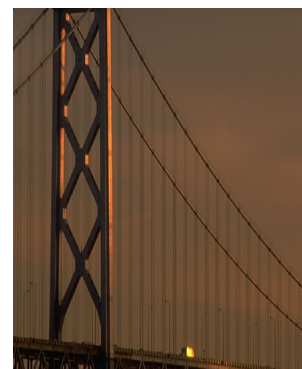
Note: This is the only official visa lottery website and the only way applications can be registered and status of entries checked. Please be wary of websites or emails advising you otherwise.

Some companies posing as the U.S. government have sought money in order to "complete" entry forms. There is no charge for entry. These sites are NOT operating on behalf of the

U.S. government.

Anyone born in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland who also meets all other entry requirements may apply.

For detailed information about entry requirements, along with frequently asked questions about the DV program, please see the instructions for the DV-2015 Diversity Visa program at http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/types/types_1318.html.



Diversity Visa Program 2015 offers Immigrant visas to 55,000 foreign nationals.

"We strongly encourage applicants not to wait until the last week of the registration period to enter"

Important Info

U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL BELFAST

Danesfort House
223 Stranmillis Road
Belfast
BT9 5GR
Phone: 02890 386104
Fax: 02890 681301
E-mail: consularbelfast@state.gov



FACEBOOK



TWITTER



TUMBLR



FLICKER



THE CULTURE SPOTLIGHT

The U.S. Consulate General often provides partial grants for cultural events which have an American element. Some of the events are free, for others there is a charge. This quarter, we encourage you to check out:

Belfast Festival at Queens—October 17-27, 2013 - It's your celebration of art and culture, providing a showcase for the finest artistic talent, from your doorstep and further afield. For over 50 years we've been lighting up the city with music, dance, drama, poetry, literature, comedy and visual arts. For details and booking information go to <http://www.belfastfestival.com/WhatsOn/>.

Belfast Music Week — November 11 –17, 2013
Belfast Music Week 2013 is a celebration of home-grown musical talent with more than 250 events running at over 70 locations in the city. From intimate venues to the grandeur of the Ulster Hall, this year's program includes classical, dance, folk, rock and acoustic performances as well as industry panel events with some of the leading figures in the international music scene. Visit the City Council website for more info - www.belfastcity.gov

Thanksgiving Events—Ulster American Folk Park – November 28, 2013 - The American Thanksgiving is an occasion for Americans to remember those from the Old World who first

settled on its shores, consider the uncertain future of the pilgrims who faced many a hardship and to pay tribute to the Native Americans who greeted the first European newcomers. Details at <http://www.nmni.org.uk>.

Disclaimer: Listing of events and performances is for information purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Consulate Belfast. All opinions expressed by the artists, writers, and performers participating or contributing to the events listed are those solely of the participants and contributors and not the U.S. Government or its designated representatives. Information is believed to be correct at the time it is listed but the U.S. Consulate accepts no liability for subsequent changes to these details and no reliance should be placed upon them.

**In the event of a genuine
emergency involving a U.S. Citizen
in Northern Ireland,
our after-hours phone number is
01253 501106.**

Holiday Calendar~ Consulate Closure Dates

**The U.S. Consulate will
be closed on the
following dates:**

Monday, November 11,
2013 Veterans Day

Thursday, November 28,
2013
Thanksgiving Day

Wednesday, December
25, 2013
Christmas Day

Thursday, December 26,
2013
Boxing Day

Wednesday, January 1,
2014 New Year's Day



Dr. Seuss

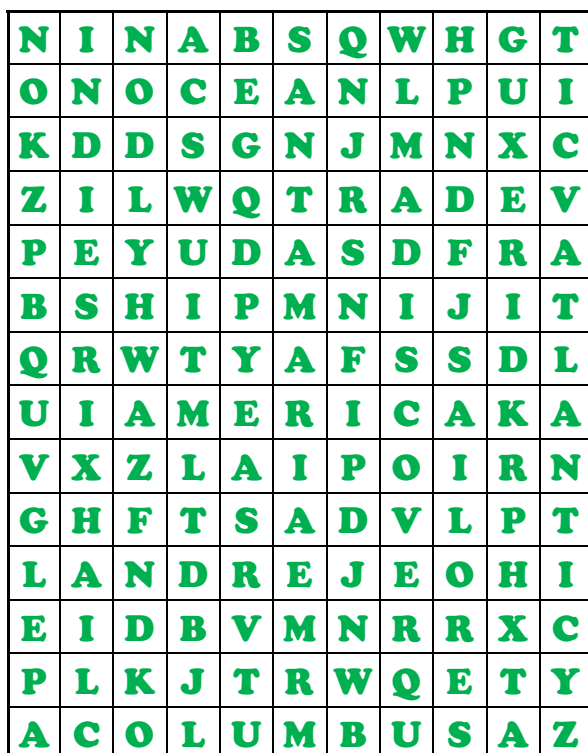
Today you are **YOU**,
that is **TRUER** than true.
There is **NO ONE** alive
who is **YOUER** than **YOU**!

Columbus Day

Observed the second
Monday of October



Kids Word Search



Nina	Pinta	Santa Maria
Discover	Ship	Land
America	Sailor	Indies
Columbus	Ocean	Atlantic

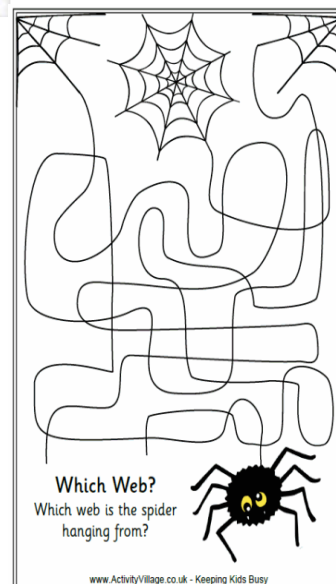
Kids Corner



On the fourth Thursday of November, Americans celebrate Thanksgiving, a national holiday honoring the early settlers and their harvest feast known as the first Thanksgiving. The first Thanksgiving meal probably consisted of deer, corn, shellfish, roasted meat and cranberries.



Belfast is beautiful at Christmas time. The beloved Belfast Christmas Market begins November 16th and runs until December 22nd. Enjoy Christmas decorations, crafts, treats,



Upcoming Events

- * **Boo at the Zoo:** October 27, 2013 at the Belfast Zoo. Don't forget to dress in costume!
- * **Disney on Ice:** Thursday, November 14, 2013 at the Odyssey Arena.
- * **Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On:** Saturday, November 16, 2013 at Belfast City Hall.